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ACTION EA 19

INFO NEA 19, SAL 01, GPM 03, SC 01, RSC 01, USIA 12, H 02, NSC 10, NSA 02,
L 03, INR 07, P 04, CIA 04, DOD 01, SP 02, SS 35, AID 30, IO 21, EUR 25,
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P R 031131Z AUG 67 ZFF
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4023
INFO RUHHHQA/CINCPAC FOR POLAD
RUMJFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2079
RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3667
RUSDHT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 90
STATE GRNC

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KATHMANDU FOR AMB BUNKER

SUBJECT: AUGUST 3 PRESS CONFERENCE OF TRAN VAN HUONG AND MAI THO TRUYEN

1. TRAN VAN HUONG AND MAI THO TRUYEN KICKED OFF THEIR CAMPAIGN ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 3 WITH A TWO AND ONE-HALF HOUR PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE CONTINENTAL HOTEL IN SAIGON. HUONG OPENED THE PRESS CONFERENCE WITH A BRIEF STATEMENT IN WHICH HE STRESSED

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THE IDEA THAT THE NATION FACES A "CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE" IN ALL FIELDS. TRUYEN READS THE SLATE'S PLATFORM, AND BOTH CANDIDATES THEN ANSWERED QUESTIONS FOR OVER AN HOUR. THE PLATFOM IS VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL WITH THE DRAFT PLATFORM SUMMARIZED IN SAIGON'S 887. THE QUESTION OF PEACE AND NEGOTIATIONS WAS CENTRAL IN THE QUESTION PERIOD: HUONG SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT NEGOTIATE WITH THE NLF, THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES TO FURTURE NEGOTIATIONS MUST BE

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NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM, AND SOUTH VIETNAM MUST REFORM ITS GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY IN ORDER TO BE IN A POSITION TO NEGOTIATE AN ACCEPTABLE PEACE.

2. AMONG THOSE SEATED ON THE PLATFORM BEHIND HUONG AND TRUYEN OFZSVE MRS. TRAN VAN VAN, VO LONG TRIEU, AND NGUYEN VAN TRUONG. THE LARGE CROWD OF JOURNALISTS PRESENT SEEMED GENERALLY VERY FRIENDLY AND OFTEN APPLAUDED HUONG'S REMARKS. HUONG HIMSELF APPEARED RELAXED AND VERY MUCH IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION. HE DID NOT CARRY A CANE.

3. FULL TEXTS OF HUONG'S OPENING STATEMENT AND THE HUONG-TRUYEN PLATFORM ARE BEING POUCHED. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE OPENING STATEMENT AND THE QUESTION PERIOD.

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4. HUONG BEGAN BY SAYING THAT "THE PRESENT STATE OF VIETNAM IS A STATE OF CRISIS". HE NOTED INFLATION, "GROWING DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN NATIONS," THE DECLINE OF MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES, POLITICAL DIVISIONS, AND "THE WAR, WHOSE INTENSITY AND WHOSE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECTS HAVE GROWN IN FRIGHTFUL PROPORTIONS, BRINGING UPHEAVAL, DISPERSION, DEATH AND MOURNING TO NEARLY EVERY VIETNAMESE FAMILY". ALL THESE THINGS ARE THE RESULT OF THE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE; THE PEOPLE HAVE COME TO MISTRUST EVERYTHING, ESPECIALLY THE GOVERNMENT. THIS LOSS OF CONFIDENCE FORCES THE GOVERNMENT TO DEPEND ON FORCE, AND "IF THE GOVERNMENT MUST COUNT ON FORSE BECAUSE IT HAS LOST AUTHORITY, THEN THE STATE WILL HAVE LOST THE MORAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SELF-DEFENSE, DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION".

5. HUONG THEN SAID THAT HE AND TRUYEN ARE NOT OFFERING THEMSLEVES AS SUPERMEN, BUT "WE BELIEVE THAT, IF ELECTED, WE CAN RESTORE CONFIDENCE AMONG THE PEOPLE". GOVERNMENT LEADERS MUST POSSESS "DIGNITY AND VIRTUE". THE PLATFORM IS "A CONTRACT CONCLUDED BY US WITH THE NATION IF WE ARE ELECTED" AND "WE CONSIDER THIS ELECTION AS A CONTRACT CONCLUDED BY THE NATION WITH US. ONCE IT AS CHOSEN US TO LEAD THE GOVERNMENT, THE NATIONS IS UNDER THE OBLIGATION OF COOPERTION...."

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6. FOLLOWING THE READING OF THE PLATFORM, THERE WERE SEVERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT NEGOTIATIONS AND PEACE. HUONG SAID THAT FRANCE MADE A GREAT MISTAKE BY NOT GIVING SOUTH VIETNAM A PART IN THE 1954 GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS. THE UNITED STATES AND THE OTHER ALLIES SHOULD AVOID THAT MISTAKE. OF COURSE SOUTH VIETNAM WOULD CONSULT ALL OF ITS ALLIES BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT THE TALKS SHOULD BE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM. (HUONG DID NOT SAY DIRECTLY THAT THE ALLIES SHOULD NOT BE REPRESENTED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT HIS REMARKS SEEMED TO IMPLY AS MUCH. HOWEVER, HIS PLATFORM SAYS THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES SHOULD BE NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM.)

7. HUONG TOOK HIS USUAL LINE THAT NEGOTIATIONS AND PEACE DEPEND ON THE PRIOR REFORM OF VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY. HE SAID THAT EVERYONE WANTS PEACE AND THAT MEANS NEGOTIATIONS, BUT "THERE ARE CONDITIONS WE CANNOT ACCEPT". NEGOTIATIONS ARE ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN CONDITIONS HAVE BEEN CREATED WHICH MAKE NEGOTIATIONS ADVANTAGEOUS.

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8. IN THIS CONTEXT HUONG TOUCHED ON REUNIFICATION. HE SAID THAT NEITHER NORTH NOR SOUTH VIETNAM CAN WIN A MILITARY VICTORY. THE BEST SOLUTION IS THEREFORE ONE WHICH WILL PERMIT BOTH SIDES TO CONCENTRATE ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMPETION. AFTER FIVE OR TEN YEARS IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE ELECTIONS TO REUNIFY THE COUNTRY. THIS, HOWEVER, WILL DEPEND ON THE OVERALL INTERNATIONAL SITUATION. NORTH VIETNAM IS NOT FREE TO ACT AS IT PLEASES, BUT MUST DEPEND ON RUSSIA AND CHINA. THE WAR IN VIETNAM IS PART OF A LARGER PICTURE AND DEPENDS ON MANY FACTORS, INCLUDING SUCH THINGS AS THE CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND DEMONSTRATIONS IN AMERICA.

9. ASKED ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE LIBERATION FRONT IN FUTURE NEGOITATIONS, HUONG SAID THAT HANOI'S DEMAND THAT THE FRONT BE REPRESENTED IN NEGOTIATIONS IS A TRAP. THE OBJECT IS TO MAKE US RECOGNIZE THE FRONT AS A GOVERNMENT EQUAL TO THAT OF SOUTH VIET-

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NAM AND TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT THE WAR IS A CIVIL WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM. TO CALL THIS WAR A CIVIL WAR WOULD MAKE THE ALLIES APPEAR TO BE AGGRESSORS WHEN IN FACT IT IS NORTH VIETNAM WHICH IS THE AGGRESSOR.

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10. COMMENTING ON THE AMERICAN PRESENCE, HUONG SAID THAT THE QUESTION IS "DELICATE," BUT THE US IS IN VIETNAM TO DEFEND FREEDOM AND PREVENT THE COMMUNISTS FROM TAKING OVER SOUTH VIETNAM. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DENY THE IMPORTANCE OF THE US ROLE: "WE WOULDN'T BE SITTING HERE NOW IF THE US WERE NOT IN VIETNAM."
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